

Police Deliberately Beat Newsmen--Rioting Report

Attacks on Press Said
Without Reason

By JAMES R. POLK

WASHINGTON (AP) — A special federal report says police deliberately attacked and beat dozens of newsmen covering the bloody street clashes which occurred during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago last August.

Newsmen, singled out by cursing policemen, were pummeled with night sticks repeatedly without reason, says a staff report released Sunday by the President's commission on violence.

But, at the same time, it finds that the antiwar protesters made skillful use of news coverage, particularly television, to dramatize their dissent. The investigators conclude that police belief that news coverage was

biased against them contributed to the violence against media personnel.

"What the whole world was watching, after all, was not a confrontation but the picture of a confrontation, to some extent directed by a generation that had grown up with television and learned to use it," the report says.

FOLLOWS RFK SLAYING

The findings are in a special task force study of the Chicago rioting made for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence appointed by President Johnson after the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. The commission has neither approved nor disapproved the staff conclusions.

Throughout the five nights of stormy street fighting, "the preponderance of violence" came from the police, not the demonstrators, the report concludes.

Much of the police violence directed against newsmen "was plainly deliberate," the report says.

The investigators report an over-all total of 63 newsmen were physically attacked by police during the peace protests.

The task force devotes a special section of the report to police violence against the news media and includes blow-by-blow accounts of cases involving 49 newsmen who were "hit, maced, or arrested, apparently without reason, by police."

OTHERS CONSIDERED

Other cases, deleted from the report, are "under active consideration" by the Justice Department, the task force says.

The study said the police



—AP WIREPHOTO.
ACCORDING TO a special federal report to the President's commission on violence, dozens of newsmen covering Chicago street-clashes during the Democratic National Convention last August were deliberately attacked and beaten by police. John Evans, NBC-TV newsmen, who is pictured here, interviewed a bloodied man after Evans reportedly was struck by a policeman Aug. 27 in Chicago's Lincoln Park.

blamed newsmen for refusing to obey orders, for blinding them with television lights which made them targets for stoning by protesters and for attracting demonstrators by their presence.

"News reports of events did seem to the police to be anti-Chicago and anti-police," the report says.

"But was the response appropriate to the provocation?" The report, without answering

the question specifically, leaves little doubt that the investigators feel it was not.

VIGNETTES TOLD

The vignettes of violence as given in the report include:

—Claude Lewis, a political reporter for the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, stopped to make notes when he saw police beating a girl. "The policemen grabbed the notebook, tossed it into the gutter, and clubbed Lewis four or five times on the head, knocking him to the ground. Lewis' blood covered his head and clothing." He was hospitalized a day and a half.

—NBC television cameraman James Stricklin started to film a police beating of CBS cameraman Delos Hall. A policeman hit Stricklin on the mouth with a nightstick. Others chased him. Stricklin said, "The next thing I

know I was being hit on the head, and I think on the back, and I was just forced down on the ground." He spent two days in a hospital.

—Winston S. Churchill II, heir to an immortal British name, was covering a clash in the downtown hotel area for the London Evening News when police knocked him to the ground. When he got up, he and another newsman were momentarily pinned against the wall by a policeman rushing them on a motorcycle.

ONE IN FIVE BEATEN

The report estimates the beating victims represented roughly one out of every five newsmen assigned to covering the street violence. In most instances, it says, those beaten carried visible credentials identifying them as newsmen.

The report, in noting the news coverage helped strengthen the effect of the demonstrations, says "There is no question that the protesters in Chicago, as elsewhere, 'played to the cameras' or that they often did it very effectively."

The task force quoted Yippie protest leader Abbie Hoffman:

"I fight through the jungle of TV."

The task force says police tempers were irritated by the feeling that news coverage was biased against them, their may-

or and their city. Policemen accused reporters of faking stories, and the report cites two accounts by federal attorneys who witnessed protesters feigning injury for television cameras.

TV COVERAGE OK'D

However, the task force, indirectly, gives a vote of confidence to the accuracy and validity of the television coverage by relying strongly on its films to provide a record of the most serious violence that erupted in the downtown area the night the convention chose Hubert H. Humphrey as its nominee.

The report touches on the press relations on the convention floor itself by citing the striking of two CBS newsmen by guards and stressing the curtailment of press credentials by Democratic officials.

The task force said the stringent limits on floor credentials caused an initial irritation among newsmen and a hostility toward the Chicago convention that may have spilled over into relations with police.

Meanwhile, police were unhappy with press coverage and, "in this emotional climate, with police tempers already shortened by conflicts with demonstrators, it was perhaps inevitable that incidents of police-press violence would occur," the report concludes.